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STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE RAVALLI COUNTY PLANNING PROGRAM
IDENTIFYING THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO MEET PLANNING GOALS
January 12, 2007

On December 13, 2006, upon recommendations from the Planning Staff and Planning Board, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) adopted a prioritized list of goals for the Ravalli County land-use planning program as follows:

1. Create a public involvement plan
2. Meet legally-mandated deadlines for development proposal review (i.e., "project review" – processing applications for subdivisions, subdivision exemptions, voluntary zoning districts, and floodplain permits)
3. Implement countywide zoning and associated projects
4. Establish the Open Lands program
5. Update and modernize the Subdivision Regulations

With these goals in mind and considering but not totally limiting the Ravalli County Planning Program to the resources available, Planning Staff developed a two-year timeline and work plan illustrating the projected time span of each project from beginning to end. The timeline includes a month-by-month estimate of how many full-time employees or equivalencies (FTE) would be required to fulfill these goals, as well as maintaining the normal responsibilities and functions of the Planning Department. (See *Proposed Allocation of Planning Department Staff Time, 2007-2008*, attached.)

Not surprisingly, the two most demanding activities on the list were project review and countywide zoning. More detailed descriptions of how these estimates were derived are outlined in the *Countywide Zoning Work Plan and Analysis of Staff Time Needed to Comply with Project Review Deadlines*, attached.

The average staff-time demand estimated for 2007 and 2008 are projected at approximately 10.9 and 10.3 full-time employees, respectively. (These estimates disregard the potential involvement of outside professional consultation in the development of countywide zoning regulations.) As of January 1, 2007, there are currently nine employees on the Planning Department Staff. In order to accomplish the County's planning goals, it will be necessary to overcome this deficit in staff availability.

Expected Results of Proposed Planning Approach

In summary, staff's proposal (illustrated in the attached materials) creates a compromise between the ideal situation (unlimited or a greater amount of resources, which would immediately take existing staff time away from meeting project review deadlines and the countywide zoning effort in order to pursue funding) and the status quo (existing staff and very little additional resources). At a modest cost, this proposal accomplishes the adopted goals over a longer period of time and with less assistance from outside consultation than would be expected in an ideal situation. Under this scenario, the following benefits would be achieved:

- All of the adopted goals would be addressed by the end of 2008;
- Project review deadlines would be met;
- Professional consultation would be available to facilitate a portion of the countywide zoning process;
- Phase I of countywide zoning could be adopted by mid-2008, requiring a modest extension of the deadline imposed by interim zoning;
- Modernized Subdivision Regulations could be adopted by the end of 2008; and
- Additional staff would be available to implement long-range planning and administer programs once established.

Recommended Steps for Achieving Expected Results

In order to fulfill the staff-time demand that would be required in this scenario, the following measures would need to be taken:

1. Hire one additional staff member
2. Acquire external financial assistance, such as grants or donations
3. Hire professional consultation to conduct or at least assist with the geographic information systems (GIS) analysis for Phase I of countywide zoning
4. Hire professional consultation to assist with the public involvement process for the Phase 1 of countywide zoning
5. Adopt the current draft *Countywide Zoning Work Plan*
6. Restructure the project review fee schedule and add zoning administration fees that match the true cost of services provided
7. Free-up existing staff for long-range planning activities by offering overtime
8. Consider contracting a portion of project review out to private consultants
9. Consider having entities that are receiving planning assistance for programs, pay for this service

Additional Funding Required to Support Proposed Planning Approach

One of the difficulties with this scenario is acquiring additional resources necessary to fund it, especially in the middle of the fiscal year. Staff is researching a number of options. The overall additional funding necessary to support the proposed allocation of staff work time in the immediate future, at an absolute minimum, must include resources to pay for the following:

- Approximately \$10,000 this fiscal year and approximately \$45,000 (ongoing annual commitment) for one additional FTE, primarily to cover project review. This cannot be funded by grants or other "soft money".

- Approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 as a one time payment for consulting services to support the countywide zoning project, about one half would need to be available this fiscal year and one half next fiscal year
- Approximately \$5,000 in overtime (initial allocation) for this fiscal year for existing staff to help cover the current gap in funding for project review, and to a lesser extent other planning projects. (This is the equivalent of 4 planners each working 10 additional hours each week for approximately 5 weeks.)

Potential Resources for Supporting Additional Costs

Staff is in the process of finishing our evaluation of financial resources at this time and will present this information as a supplemental memo. Resources currently under consideration include:

1. Raising administrative fees for subdivision review and establishing fees for zoning
2. Reallocating existing budget resources to help pay for overtime and consulting resources
3. Finding **immediately accessible** outside funding sources to supplement our existing resources to help pay for Phase 1 of countywide zoning
4. Find other funding sources (things that take longer to secure) to help support more long term planning projects or those projects that can wait for additional funding resources